

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2063

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

USINT DAMASCUS

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 1983

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IS

SUBJ: INITIAL REACTION TO AGRANAT COMMISSION'S PARTIAL REPORT

REF: TEL AVIV 1943

SUMMARY: INTIAL REACTIONS TO AGRANAT COMMISSION'S PARTIAL REPORT ON ISRAELI SHORTCOMINGS PRIOR TO OCTOBER WAR HAVE FOCUSED ON QUESTION OF MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY WHICH WAS NOT ADDRESSED BY REPORT. SPECIAL KNESSET SESSION WILL TAKE PLACE APRIL 10 AT WHICH TIME OPPOSITION BLOC LIKUD IS EXPECTED TO INTRODUCE MOTION OF NO CONFIDENCE. PARTIAL REPORT WILL NOT SATISFY THOSE CALLING FOR MRS MEIR'S AND DAYAN'S RESIGNATIONS AND CONTROVERSY OVER QUESTION OF MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY WILL, IN OUR OPINION, CONTINUE. END SUMMARY.

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1. DEPARTMENT WILL HAVE SEEN EXCERPTS FROM AGRANAT

COMMISSION'S PARTIAL REPORT ON ISRAELI SHORTCOMINGS PRIOR TO OCTOBER WAR CARRIED FBIS AS WELL AS DATT'S SUMMARY OF REPORT. AFTER REVIEWING EVENTS LEADING UP TO DECISION ON MORNING OF OCT 6 TO MOBILIZE ISRAELI RESERVES, COMMISSION REACHED CONCLUSION ON DAYAN'S RESPONSIBILITY THAT "BY STANDARDS OF REASONABLE BEHAVIOR REQUIRED BY THE ONE HOLDING THE POST OF DEFENSE MINISTER, THE MINISTER WAS NOT REQUIRED TO ISSUE ORDERS ADDITIONAL TO OR DIFFERENT FROM THOSE PROPOSED TO HIM BY THE GENERAL STAFF." COMMISSION ALSO NOTED THAT POSITION OF MINISTER OF DEFENSE WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE A "SUPER CHIEF OF STAFF" NOR WAS THE POSITION "IPSO FACTO A SORT OF SUPREME COMMANDER OF THE IDF." COMMISSION EXPLICITLY STATED THAT IT DID NOT FEEL ITSELF OBLIGED TO ADDRESS QUESTION OF WHETHER A MINISTER, IN THIS CASE DAYAN, SHOULD ON THE BASIS OF HIS PAST EXPERIENCE OR EXPERTISE, "ACT CONTRARY TO THE UNANIMOUS RECOMMENDATION OF HIS OWN PROFESSIONAL ADVISORS."

2. AS FOR COMMISSION'S FINDINGS WITH RESPECT TO PRIME MINISTER MEIR, PARTIAL REPORT STATED "COMMISSION IS CONVINCED THAT PRIME MINISTER MEIR ACTED FITTINGLY DURING THE CRITICAL DAYS PRECEDING THE OUTBREAK OF THE WAR." (LABOR PARTY KNESSET MEMBER WHO SAW MRS MEIR LAST EVENING SAID THAT PRIME MINISTER WAS VERY HAPPY AND RELIEVED THAT SHE HAD BEEN EXONERATED BY COMMISSION.) IT SHOULD BE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT COMMISSION STATED IN ITS REPORT THAT IT DID NOT DEAL WITH OR BELIEVE IT SHOULD DEAL WITH QUESTION OF MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY.

3. THIS LATTER POINT HAS BEEN THEME OF SEVERAL EDITORIALS APPEARING IN TODAY'S PRESS. IN UNUSUAL FRONT PAGE EDITORIAL, DAVAR STATED "REGRETTABLY, THE CHIEF OF STAFF AND CERTAIN OFFICERS ARE DELAT WITH IN A MANNER WHICH INDICATES A TENDENCY TO EXTREME SEVERITY. AND WHILE THE SUBJECT MATTER WOULD JUSTIFY EXTREME SEVERITY THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE DOCUMENT, IT IS OFFSET BY EXTREME LENIENCY WITH RESPECT TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE, EVEN IN WAYS THAT SEEM BARELY RELEVANT." HAARETZ, WHILE PRAISING REPORT'S OBJECTIVITY IN DELAING WITH SHORTCOMINGS WITHIN IDF, WENT ON TO STATE THAT "ONE MAY STILL WONDER TOWHAT EXTENT THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE IS NEVERTHELESS RESPONSIBLE

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WHEN THE CHIEF OF STAFF AND AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE IDF TOP ECHELON ARE FOUND UNSUITABLE FOR FURTHER DUTY."

4. AL HAMISHMAR ALSO QUESTIONED DAYAN'S RESPONSIBILITY BY STATING THAT "WHILE THE ABSOLUTE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF...CANNOT BE CONTESTED, THE ACTUAL SYSTEM WHICH HAS DEVELOPED IN RECENT YEARS DOES NOT LEAVE HIM AS THE SOLE ARBITER OF INTELLIGENCE EVALUATIONS: THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE

HAS AT LEAST AN EQUAL SHARE IN THEM". FINALLY, MAARIV ALSO CALLED FOR A CLOSER EXAMINATION OF DAYAN'S RESPONSIBILITY. EDITORIAL STATED "SINCE THE CABINET APPOINTS THE CHIEF OF STAFF ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE, THE MINISTER MUST BE RESPONSIBLE IF HIS CHOICE PROVES WRONG. IT IS UNACCEPTABLE TO LET THE IDF, WHICH IS AN EXECUTIVE ORGAN, BEAR THE WHOLE BRUNT OF RESPONSIBILITY, WHILE THE POLITICAL AUTHORITY WHICH IS IN CHARGE OF IT GOES FREE."

5. REACTION BY RIGHT-WING LIKUD HAS BEEN PREDICTABLE. IN APRIL 3 INTERVIEW OVER ISRAEL RADIO, LIKUD MK SHMUEL TAMIR STATED THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO SEPARATE CHIEF OF STAFF ELAZAR'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR SHORTCOMINGS PRIOR TO OCTOBER WAR FROM THAT HELD BY MRS MEIR AND DAYAN. TAMIR WENT ON TO SAY THAT FROM A MORAL AND POLITICAL VIEWPOINT, MRS MEIR'S GOVERNMENT SHOULD RESIGN. LIKUD LEADER MENAHEM BEGIN HAS ALSO MADE A SIMILAR STATEMENT. LIKUD WILL NO DOUBT OFFER A MOTION OF NO CONFIDENCE IN APRIL 10 SPECIAL KNESSET SESSION WHICH WILL BE CONVENED TO HEAR A STATEMENT BY MRS MEIR'S GOVERNMENT ON THE COMMISSION'S PARTIAL REPORT.

6. COMMENT. WITHOUT COMMENTING IN DEPTH ON COMMISSION'S PARTIAL FINDINGS, WE ARE STRUCK ON ONE HAND WITH SEVERITY WITH WHICH CHIEF OF STAFF ELAZAR AND MEMBERS OF HIS INTELLIGENCE STAFF ARE DEALT WITH AND WAY IN WHICH POLITICAL LEADERSHIP, IN GENERAL, AND PRIME MINISTER MEIR AND DEFMIN DAYAN, IN PARTICULAR, ARE EXONERATED FROM BLAME IN EVENTS LEADING UP TO SYRIAN-EGYPTIAN ATTACK ON AFTERNOON OF OCTOBER 6. PARTIAL REPORT WILL OBVIOUSLY NOT SATISFY THOSE CRITICS WHO HAVE BEEN CALLING FOR MRS MEIR'S AND DAYAN'S RESIGNATIONS. CONTROVERSY OVER QUESTION OF MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR SHORTCOMINGS PRIOR TO AND DURING WAR WILL IN OUR OPINION CONTINUE UNABATED WITH APRIL 10 KNESSET DEBATE PROVIDING PLENTY
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OF POLITICAL FIREWORKS.
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